

D.C.

378 p 748

N723

MONODY

TO THE MEMORY OF

REV. DR CHARLES NISBET

The author of the
Monody is Charles
Keith. See his
letter to Mrs. Nisbet,
July 11, 1805.

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The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11



MONODY

TO THE MEMORY OF THE

REV. DR CHARLES NISBET.

To

The Right Honourable

Lord Montagu

With the most respectful Compliments
of *The Author*

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11

MONODY

TO THE MEMORY OF THE

REV. DR CHARLES NISBET,

MANY YEARS FIRST MINISTER OF MONTROSE, AND LATE

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF CARLISLE,

IN PENNSYLVANIA.

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Astra tenes, propiusque Deo quem mente colebas

Nunc frueris.

BUCHANANUS.

EDINBURGH:

Printed by James Ballantyne,

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1805.

The author of the
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D.C.

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PREFACE.

THE author hoped some masterly hand would have paid a tribute of this nature to the memory of the Reverend Dr CHARLES NISBET; but as no such mark of merited respect has been shown, either in Great Britain or America, he makes the following feeble attempt, in honour of learning, talent, and worth.

It is incumbent on him to apologize for the introduction of French politics, while he describes the character and virtues of his late venerable friend. Zealous to do justice to the Doctor's merits, he was naturally led to a subject which had so much pained the mind, and impeded the usefulness of that excellent man. In his letters to the author, he deeply lamented that his efforts to

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11

promote useful learning, true piety, good morals, and sound opinions, were often completely frustrated by the pernicious doctrines of French democrats. It may be noticed, that the Doctor, whose genius and acquirements were equally uncommon, bore a great resemblance to Mr Burke in talent and sentiment. Both were great admirers of liberty, till liberty became licentiousness—both, from the dawn of the French revolution, set their faces against it, and predicted its dreadful consequences: and if the Doctor's letters to the author, and his other correspondents in Britain, were in the possession of the public, they probably would not suffer by a comparison with Mr Burke's writings, in comprehension of mind, acuteness of discernment, justness of sentiment, and elegance of diction. As a proof of the high estimation in which the Doctor was held by such as were capable of duly appreciating his uncommon talents, great acquirements, and many virtues, the author has transcribed from an American newspaper the following character; which, while it does honour to the writer, for elegance of style, vigour of sentiment, and accuracy of delineation, bears ample testimony that the author of the Monody is not so partial in the description of his lamented friend, as

some may suppose, who never had the good fortune of knowing Doctor Nisbet.

Extract from an American Paper.

“ In the death of Doctor Nisbet, Dickenson College, over which he presided for more than eighteen years, has suffered an immense loss.

“ His capacious mind was stored with general erudition, and miscellaneous knowledge in an uncommon degree. He was skilled not only in the ancient tongues, but had an extensive acquaintance with many of the modern languages. Though an adept in verbal criticism, his acumen was directed not so much to words, as to things; to language, as to sentiment.

“ Possessed of a memory singularly retentive, and of a judgment singularly penetrating, he made himself master of a subject with amazing facility and dispatch, and there was no subject beneath his notice. Not only the circle of the sciences, but every topic relative to public and private affairs; not only the philosophy of the human mind, but that philosophy which directs the practical farmer, and the operative mechanic; not only a knowledge of the general history of the world, but an ac-

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11

quaintance with every local occurrence, was the object of his attention; and by attending to them, he was qualified for leading the conversation in every company and on every subject: Thus it was that he was so admirably fitted for imbuing the minds of his pupils with the principles of logic and moral philosophy, the departments of which it was his province to conduct, and for communicating instruction on every collateral subject. The lectures which he delivered in college were plain and simple, but rich and valuable compositions. Regardless of the superficial ornaments of style, his object was to deliver, in perspicuous and forcible language, the elements of knowledge sound and strong. Never did any one, who had a taste for solid learning, hear his lectures without pleasure and improvement, nor leave his class without regret. In private life the Doctor was a most entertaining companion; his humour was excellent and exhaustless; his penetrating mind perceived, as it were intuitively, relations and connections among things, which would almost escape every other, and he was constantly enlivening conversation with flashes of wit, sudden and surprising. His remarks on men, their manners, and their ways, were often cutting and severe.

Himself a model of integrity, he had a rooted abhorrence of deceit and chicanery in others. His noble and independent mind scorned the idea of procuring *favour*, or of ensuring *popularity*, by any means inconsistent with the most dignified sentiments of our nature; and he entertained the most sovereign contempt for the man, who, to obtain the one or the other, would cringe to the multitude. His character cannot better be summed up, than in the words of the biographer of the illustrious Dr Campbell.

“ His imagination was lively and fertile, his understanding equally acute and vigorous, and his erudition at once very deep and wonderfully diversified. His morals were unimpeached, his temper cheerful, his manners gentle and unassuming,—as a *principal of a college*, or a *minister of the gospel*, as a *true patriot*, or a *good man*, quando ullum invenies parem?”

EDINBURGH, May 20th, 1805.

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11

MONODY.

Is there no poet with a muse sublime,
No bard inspir'd in the wide western clime ;
Did matchless genius every charm display,
And could its loss not meet one mournful lay ?
Ah ! could no son, COLUMBIA, touch the lyre,
Ah ! could not excellence one bosom fire ?
Did honour, virtue, truth, unheeded shine,
The man all worth, all learning the divine ;
Did NISBET live to light your land so long,
And could he die without a fun'ral song !
For you I blush, yet trembling touch the lyre,
Though warm'd with zeal and friendship's sacred fire.
O may an angel Muse my guardian be,
APOLLO and the Nine are nought to me.

Lur'd more by art than dignities or gain,
He bade adieu to Scotia's happy plain ;

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11

All warm in wishes to instruct mankind,
With richest stores from *his* capacious mind ;
Brav'd seas and storms, the vast Atlantic cross'd,
And soon, too soon, by wilder billows toss'd ;
By pride, by ignorance, by folly's sneer ;
Envy in front, and malice in the rear ;
By jealousy malign, with looks aghast,
And base ingratitude's all-chilling blast.

His heart sincere, his philanthropic mind
Felt ev'ry wish to meliorate mankind ;
With purest love he gave his precious hours,
Man to improve by his exalted pow'rs ;
'Twas *his*, from clouds of vice the mind to clear,
Man to restore to bliss, to God endear :
'Twas *his*, with zeal, true science to impart,
By each engaging charm, each winning art ;
His, with choice gifts, to warn from every snare,
Man's noblest int'rests *his* peculiar care :
At others' joy, with joy his bosom glow'd,
At others' woe, his tender feelings flow'd.

He gave a pattern to domestic life—
O happy children, highly favour'd wife !

Ye knew how well he acted ev'ry part,
How duty and affection warm'd his heart :
Though a degen'rate age his soul oppress'd,
You held the spotless empire of his breast ;
Be his pure precepts in your actions shown,
And let your lives be transcripts of his own.

Nor less in public life did he excel
In thinking wisely, and in acting well ;
A champion firm for injur'd virtue's laws,
A powerful advocate to plead her cause.

French demons, skill'd in all the basest arts,
At truth and honour aim'd their venom'd darts ;
'Twas *his* to lead to wisdom, virtue, joy ;
Theirs, to corrupt, to torture, and destroy ;
While piety and love compos'd his plan,
They fear'd not God, nor yet regarded man :
“ Behold,” they cry, “ our free enlighten'd Gaul !”
And slaves to ev'ry vice, for freedom bawl :
At home, Heav'n's citadel they dar'd to storm ;
This their grand effort, when they states reform.
Next, in their gibberish stile, they organize,
That is, *reverse the order of the skies ;*

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11

'Then, freedom, then, extends her vast domain,
And death, and dread, and desolation reign.
O *liberty*, how grand are thy pursuits !
Equality, how precious are thy fruits !
Princes, and peers, and priests, ye sacrifice,
Millions of victims, as your incense rise ;
Destroying angels to the human race,
Demons of discord, man's supreme disgrace.
Degen'rate France first made these idols shine,
And bade mankind be prostrate at their shrine ;
Unthinking mortals, dazzl'd with their view,
Soon found them furies of the blackest hue ;
Soon found, alas ! their ruthless empire stood
In devastation, and in seas of blood.
Deluded France, what was your mighty gain !
An upstart NERO for VESPASIAN slain ;
A deadly serpent twining round the heart,
For *him* who cherish'd ev'ry vital part ;
A wolf rapacious, for a parent's wing,
A renegado, for a Christian king ;
Your empire sunk, your throne for ever stain'd,
A robber sits, where your great HENRY reign'd.

He bade deluded men on Britain look,
Who Gallic anarchy for freedom took :
True friend to rightful rule, to order's cause,
He taught, that freedom only reign'd by laws ;
That constitutions to perfection rise,
As laws are pure, and legislators wise.
Though his great mind once fondly hop'd to see
Men wise, and just, and good, *as they were free*,
He found in liberty's all boasted train,
Ambition lurk, and lawless lust of gain ;
Though, like fam'd BURKE, fair freedom warm'd
his soul,
The freedom, that could lead to virtue's goal ;
Though, like him, jealous of despotic pow'r,
The canker worm, man's comforts to devour ;
Yet, when the madd'ning mob assum'd the sway,
And rage and rapine rul'd in open day ;
When kings and nobles from their seats were hurl'd,
And sacrilege the pastime of the world ;
When all the knaves, in ev'ry state, combin'd,
And stil'd themselves, DELIV'RERS of MANKIND ;
When law was vanquish'd in fair freedom's name,
And social order left no rights to claim ;

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 1

When wild chimeras, with fell discord fraught,
For truth and sound philosophy were taught;
When all was govern'd by *Almighty chance*,
The Sacred Scriptures deem'd a wild romance;
Virtue decried, in loud triumphant tone,
The Deity expell'd his heav'nly throne,
Man's joys, all swallow'd by *destructions deep*,
Man's hopes, all buried in *eternal sleep*;
He, all indignant, saw the horrid plan,
Hostile alike to God, to virtue, man;
With all the pow'rs of reason, judgment, truth,
'Twas *his* to warn, and guard the minds of youth,
Against *such doctrines*, sprung from France and Hell,
That, *to reform the world*, is *to rebel*;
'That *all man's pow'rs*, and *all his rights*, are *vain*,
If *titles blazon*, and if *monarchs reign*;
That *liberty* is all an *airy dream*,
Unless the *sovereign people* rule *supreme*.
He saw, with deep concern, the world's disgrace,
The sad debasement of the human race,
While hideous monsters held their hateful reign,
All laws to trample, and all rights profane;
Taught ev'ry vice, inflicted ev'ry smart,
And banish'd feeling from the human heart;

Robb'd men of earth, of heav'n, of fortune, fame,
And all this horror veil'd by freedom's name ;
The Rights of Man, incessantly, they cried,
And yet they ev'ry right to God denied ;
From man's best rights they madly turn'd their eyes,
The rights of *doing good*, and *being wise*.

Nor ceas'd his labours, nor decay'd his zeal,
That man might wisely act, and nobly feel ;
Yet griev'd to see him ev'ry wish restrain
To fancied freedom, pow'r, and paltry gain ;
Anxious to win the young, their thoughts engage,
That virtue's seeds might bloom in riper age ;
That learning's gifts might ev'ry bliss impart,
And ev'ry finer feeling warm the heart :
His worth, his wisdom, and his genius rare,
Oft spent " their fragrance in the desert air."

His, was a spark of heav'nly fire, all bright,
With clouds around of ignorance and night ;
That spark divine could ev'ry tempest brave,
Oceans of pride, and folly's ceaseless wave ;

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 11

Still bright it shone with undiminish'd ray,
Pure and exhaustless, as the god of day ;
Defying change when worlds receive their doom,
Not dimm'd by death, nor faded by the tomb.

O western world, your noblest boast is fled !
Let tears of woe embalm the *sacred dead* :
Review his worth, his vast endowments tell,
And on his life and great example dwell ;
While that rich gem shone in your favour'd eyes,
That gem so precious, did you duly prize ?

Exalted soul ! thy Caledonia weeps,
Her love, maternal, slumbers not nor sleeps ;
From dawn of infancy, 'twas *hers* to trace
Her future ornament, her pride, her grace ;
'Twas *hers*, with joy, to mark each op'ning ray,
That augur'd genius of resplendent day,
When ev'ry art and science should combine,
When wit should dazzle, and when learning shine :
That long'd for era all-auspicious came,
And her choice glory liv'd in thy fair fame ;
Thy fame increasing, with increasing days,
Thy talents shining still with brighter blaze.

The book of life, the storehouse of the mind,
Heav'n's richest treasure, giv'n to bless mankind,
She saw thee ope, with wisdom's pow'rs divine,
The soul to elevate, the heart refine ;
Saw thine was love, and thine *a pastor's care*,
To guard from sin, and ev'ry worldly snare ;
To lead the young to joys that never cease,
By heav'nly wisdom, whose blest paths are peace ;
The poor to comfort, mourners woes assuage,
And hope impart, to prop declining age ;
The sick to solace, ease affliction's rod,
To bid the dying put their trust in God ;
To teach the proud their wayward paths to scan,
And learn humility, best boast of man ;
To urge the rich to seek *that* wealth with zeal
Where moths corrupt not, where no thief can steal.
Though heav'n's rich gifts did thy best pow'rs employ,
She saw thee, too, descend to social joy
Saw lively wit, enthron'd on genius, shine,
And all the charms of chastest humour *thine* ;
Saw fancy's brightest rays unceasing flow,
And friendship's sacred flame for ever glow :

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 1

She heard thy name resound to distant climes,
She saw thy fame would reach to future times.

America beheld, with anxious eyes,
And, by address, obtain'd this matchless prize;
And Caledonia, honour'd by his name,
Preferr'd his glory to a mother's fame;
With pain, with pride, her darling son resign'd
To bless, to tutor, to exalt mankind.
Deep skill'd in science, rich in learning's lore,
And rich in treasures of celestial store;
With every talent to point out the way
To earth's best joys, and heaven's immortal day;
Resign'd him to adorn the western clime,
With all that's lovely, noble, and sublime;
To ope the mind, with ev'ry winning art,
And stores of richest knowledge to impart;
To lead the soul to each exalted view,
Nor only science, but fair truth pursue;
To teach the virtues, light with wisdom's ray,
With heav'nly beams, to glad life's dreary way;
To gain mankind by each endearing charm,
And life, and death, of ev'ry sting disarm:

While wisdom's treasures warm'd his ev'ry strain,
Ye, thoughtless *many* ! scorn'd your richest gain ;
While he, with zeal, improv'd the happy few,
The *Rights of Man* were kings and priests to you ;
Like the deaf adder, ye evinced your choice,
Madly disdain'd to hear the charmer's voice ;
Though virtue was his aim, and truth his view,
Friendship, the wine of life, he seldom knew ;
Save its effusions, from lov'd Britain's isle,
To glad his heart, and irksome hours beguile ;
There, valued friends his thoughts would oft em-
ploy,
And their prized intercourse, his choicest joy :
Britannia's weal, his pride, his prime desire,
She warm'd his heart with purest patriot fire ;
While a new world engag'd his precious pow'rs,
He thought on Britain's joys, and peaceful bow'rs ;
Her laws best suited to repel man's foes,
Hers, the best model, for the world's repose ;
While states and kingdoms were to ruin hurl'd,
'Twas *her's* to tow'r, proud bulwark of the world ;
Without, all powerful, to defend from harm,
Within, all lovely, fraught with ev'ry charm ;

The author of the
Monody
Keith.
letter
July 1

Free from the tyrant hand the lev'ling train,
Religion, laws, and spotless freedom reign :
He joy'd to see her heaven's peculiar care,
And for her weal pour'd forth his warmest prayer*.

All sainted soul ! forgive his artless strain,
Who wafts his sigh beyond the western main ;
Who, living, lov'd thee ; with a heart sincere,
Now wails thy loss with friendship's sacred tear.

Lamented shade ! at thy all hallow'd shrine
Unfading wreaths the weeping virtues twine ;
And pure religion droops her sacred head,
Laments her friend, her faithful NISBET dead †.

* This excellent man, a short time before his death, in his last letter to the author, concludes thus :—" May the Lord of Hosts preserve Great Britain, and confound *the designs* of the enemies of mankind."

† Dr Nisbet, who was exemplary for his piety and his regard to the interests of true religion, gave a complete course of lectures on divinity in the college of Carlisle ; and the author has reason to believe, that the Doctor's was the first and only course of theological lectures ever composed or delivered in America.

Britannia mourns, in sorrow's deepest gloom ;
Immortal Genius sighs around thy tomb ;
That wit which blaz'd, to charm the world before,
Is set in night, alas ! to rise no more ;
Learning divine appears in sad dismay,
Reft of so rich a gem, so bright a ray.
Transcendant worth shall rouse the trump of Fame,
And mem'ry's page record his honour'd name.

Angelic shade ! thy great example nigh,
May teach us how to live, and how to die ;
Like thee, meet joy or woe, delight or pain,
Like thee, to suffer, and like thee, to reign.

THE END.

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July 1

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